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enslaved by it,—that is the problem of the child in the school. That we are finding and training people who can use a tool or

a book or an occasion for the welfare of the child—that is the triumph of the library for the child.

THE PROVINCE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

BY R. R. BOWKER, *Editor, Library Journal, New York*

Mr. President and fellow members of the A. L. A.: One can not but hark back from this meeting a quarter century to the first visit of the A. L. A. to this Coast. I recall that we were shown then all these wonderful garden spots which three years before, we were told, were nothing but a desert of sage brush, and our humorist reported to us at a reception where our hostess had the most lovely profusion of golden hair that in a confidential moment she had said to him, "You see these luxuriant tresses? Three years ago this head was only a desert of sage brush!"

Twenty-five years is a long time in the modern history of California, and it is interesting to note that this land of gold is less and less valuing the gold of the darkness and more and more valuing the gold of the sunshine; thinking less of that gold of the dead past, which must be painfully and patiently dug from the mines or from the sands, and emphasizing more the golden fruitage and the golden grain of the living present and the yet greater harvest of the great future which such genius as that of Burbank is prophesying for this wonderful Coast. It is reported often in the East that our California friends have large imaginations, so that they realize in advance the figures of population and wealth of the next census, instead of harking back to the last one; but we who have come to California feel as when the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon, that the half had not been told us, and, like Solomon, California, having riches and honor, has nevertheless made choice of wisdom.

And so we are met in this noble and splendid state university, which represents wisdom as the crown of the riches and the

honor of this great state. When at the turn of the century it came time to rebuild this great institution for the future, the state showed its catholic feeling by opening a world-wide competition for the planning of the grounds, and its catholicity was emphasized by the choice of a French landscape artist for that purpose, and this work was taken up by an American genius, the professor of architecture in the university, who has brought forth the results which we have seen; and I can not refrain from mentioning that France, with its free education to all comers of all nations, had educated not only the French citizen who planned the grounds, but the American citizen who has since crowned his work, so that France is now showing itself in the free education of California. And how glorious that that work should be crowned at last by this beautiful belfry, uprising toward the blue, whose bells ring out the old, ring in the new, and chimes a larger liberty, a greater independence, the liberty of knowledge.

What a far cry from the little red school house of New England and the patient schoolma'am who came from the East half a century ago, as soon as the mining camps and the settlements here had children to teach, to begin the teaching of the new race here! What a far cry to this noble university, the last in a chain of free institutions for the higher education, stretching from my own free College of the City of New York, which from its historic heights fronts the sunrise over the Atlantic, to this beautiful sight, looking across the Bay through the Golden Gate to the sunset of the Pacific! What a far cry from the four books of the Mechanics'

Library half a century ago, of which Dr. Jenks told us the other evening, to the library of the modern day, to this splendid example of modern architecture housing the Bancroft library, so happily saved from the great earthquake and the great fire, to the Library of Congress, whose work and whose chief you so rightly acclaimed the other day, and to the New York Public Library, that greatest example of the popular library of our time! And I must add, what a far cry from that little group of three, Frederick Leypoldt, that great and generous bibliographer long since passed over to the majority, Melvil Dewey and myself still among the living, who issued the first call and from the hundred or so who formed the first conferences of the A. L. A.,—when Miss Matthews and one or two other ladies were almost lost in the overwhelming number of men, and quietly pulled the coat tails of Dr. Poole and asked if he would not speak up in meeting for them,—to this great international body of the American Library Association, with its three thousand members, where “votes for women” so overwhelmingly predominate that it is only by your courtesy that we men have any part at all!

These are examples of what we call evolution, and in discussing provinces and functions it is not that one should play the part of a prophet, but that one should be an observer trying to learn from natural evolution what is the right thing to do, what is the right thing for which to plan. And we must remember that while the other animals, men excepted, are controlled by and are responsive to their environment, man controls his environment and makes it responsive to him, so that we have come to recognize creative evolution and conscious creative evolution, and thus to emphasize the responsibility which we have in shaping for ourselves and our fellow men the environment which is to make the future. From that point of view it occurs to me that one of the first things to do is to look at the modern public library in its highest development, and from my mental notebook I mean to re-

mind you of a few facts about the New York Public Library as the culmination of the library effort of the last generation, and from that text, as it were, to speak of the functions of the modern library and its possibilities and its limitations.

For the origin of that library, New York owes a debt to this Coast, for it was in the great Northwest that the unlettered and uneducated fur trader laid the foundation of the fortune which his son dedicated in part to the making of the Astor library. It was the friend of William B. Astor, Dr. Cogswell, a scholar and a bookman, who made the collection which was the nucleus for the great Astor library. But he passed, and then came the time exemplified in the trite story of the librarian of Harvard, who locked the door one day behind him and said that he was going over to a professor's house to get the only two books left out of the library and then the collection would be complete! At that time the librarian of the Astor library was preparing “Salad for the solitary”—some of you may recall the title of that almost forgotten book—in the rather gloomy building which repelled rather than invited use.

But also, at the same time, James Lenox, really a great collector, was laying the foundation of the Lenox part of the Astor, Lenox and Tilden foundation. Then came as the third part of that origin the legacy of Samuel J. Tilden, the Governor Tilden who believed that he should have been President Tilden—and I think we can not too much emphasize today, for not sufficient emphasis has ever been laid upon it—the significance of that episode in American history, which must become an episode in world history. For instead of a revolution, instead of uprisings, the verdict of an improvised court was accepted by half our people against their will as the unquestioned verdict of the people, and so a great statesman, who believed that he had been elected President and a great party behind him acquiesced in the verdict of the court and gave to all time an example of what an American democracy can do to avert wars such as to the south of

us and across the ocean are now a world calamity.

So out of those three sources came the Astor, Lenox and Tilden foundation of the New York Public Library. Meantime a small group of people, inspired with the modern library spirit, felt that in the great metropolis there ought to be something more than a great reference library, for today neither the president of the library nor the president of the United States can take a single book out of the main collection on Fifth Avenue. For Mr. Astor and Mr. Lenox both made the inhibition that no book should be taken from the building, a rule seemingly contrary to the modern library spirit and yet useful in its way, for it is well that in one repository a scholar should be sure that he should find at any time any book that he might want. Let us be thankful, however, that this is a single exception, and not the rule. These friends of library progress, with Mr. W. W. Appleton at their head, and with the loved lady whom we used to know as Miss Ellen Coe as their executive, started the free circulating library, and when the time came the two divisions joined to make the New York Public Library of today. There is always a man who does things, and the man for the hour and the needed man proved to be that great physician, that great bibliographer, that great scholar, that great librarian, Dr. and Col. John S. Billings—a man, a soldier who showed that there were victories of peace greater than the victories of war, a physician whose sanitation work will rank him only after the names of Waring and Gorgas, an executive who mastered men and conquered circumstances. To him, with the late president of the New York Public Library, Mr. Cadwalader, is due the result which is the noblest monument today of the public library spirit. For that work the City of New York gave the most valuable site in its keeping, and upon it erected a building costing \$9,000,000. It is a trite saying that in an American city or town of today the public library takes the place of the cathedral in a European city, and

last year there were attracted to the New York Public Library not less than two million visitors, of whom 700,000 were readers in the reference department, taking out about two million books, or nearly twice the number of books in the library. In its circulating department, in the 40 branches which have developed from the modest beginning of the New York Free Circulating Library, nine and a half million books were taken out, and this year there will be over ten million, a third of them for children, so that several times the population of New York must be multiplied to make the number of books circulated from the public library and its branches.

Besides the revenues from the great foundation the library obtained from the City of New York \$850,000, more than half of which is spent for service, and it is an interesting proof of the emphasis that service has in our American library system, that as a rule at least twice as much is spent for service as for books. That library spent over \$400,000 for service and not quite \$200,000 for books out of these public funds, and for that money it got pretty nearly 200,000 books, confirming in a curious way the generalization that it costs something like ten cents to circulate a book and something like an average of a dollar to buy a book. These are extraordinary figures, but they are not so extraordinary as the kind of service done in the library. And that brings me to the illustration, through that library, of the manifold functions of the public library of today.

In the beginning, Dr. Billings, with extraordinary foresight, mapped out on a library standard card still in the library the building as we see it today, which was wisely built, as every library should be, from within outward. Today a scholar working in research can go to that library, in the economics room, in the public document room, in the local history and genealogy room, in the music room, in departments far more than I can name to you, and can instantly, with the help of the most thorough expert, get at once what he wants. I remember only a few

weeks ago a scholar saying to me that the great thing about the public library was the fact that he had no longer to spend hours waiting and waiting, but he telephoned to the library and told them what books he wanted and what subject he was working on, and presently, when he arrived at the library, he found all he wanted and more than he thought existed. These books in the special departments are instantly at service, and for the general reader any book is at his service in six or seven minutes, and if so long as fifteen minutes is taken—why, that is a matter which you are requested to report at headquarters. This work in the public library itself and in the branches, is accomplished by the help of a staff of no less than twelve hundred people, inspired by the same motive of service to the public. And let me say here, that in this whole organization, second to the great work of Dr. Billings, and Edwin H. Anderson in complementing and carrying on his work, too much credit can not be given to the man who sits quietly among you today, whose modesty I will not offend by mentioning his name, who had rather, unlike Caesar, be the second man in the metropolis than the first in any other place, and to whose tact and executive ability every member of the New York Public Library staff knows how much the public owes.

In the presidential address, of such comprehensive survey and such large vision, our president of the year has cataloged, as it were, the manifold functions of the modern library. I will not repeat or try to extend that catalog, but I shall suggest to you the various fields in which the work of the public library exists. But first I want to remind you that the public library exists from the public purse, and by its social service must make good to the community. There are limitations in both directions, limitations of money and limitations of service. Our friend here from the Oregon State Agricultural College, Mrs. Kidder, was telling me only last week that she did not use student help in her library, because she thought

a person who came to it for research and who knew his subject could not rightly be waited upon by some ignoramus who had to find out about things before he could be of service; and her service to the public and to the state has been richly recognized by the obtaining of all the money needed to provide college graduates instead of student help in the library of the State Agricultural College. It is said that the State Agricultural College of Wisconsin has added fifty per cent to the output of the crops of that state, and it is also said that under Dean Henry's administration no legislator could vote against the item for the support of the State Agricultural College, or vote to reduce it, without being kept at home when he faced his constituents at the next election. These instances illustrate how willing is the public to pay for what it gets.

We are facing an extraordinary economic change: this great wave of prohibition which the necessities of war have brought in Europe and which the reasons of peace are bringing about in our own country, is taking from us one of the great sources of internal taxation; and the cessation of imports is reducing one of the chief sources of income of the national government in its customs revenues. But economists, I believe, may look forward to a straightforward system of taxation in which the public will be only too willing to pay tithes, if necessary, as did the Jewish people of old, as did our Mormon friends whose work we saw as we came through Utah, provided they get the service for the money. So that we need not fear but that all good functions of the library will be supported from the public purse.

And how wide those functions are! I hold myself a thorough-going individualist and would not willingly give up my private right of thought or action or occupation to any tyranny of democracy or otherwise. But we are all socialists in some measure: it is a question of degree. And with the public library it is a question of where the service should stop. That is a ques-

tion on which it is impossible to make a wise generalization; the decision must depend on the environment of the library, on the construction of that library and on the guiding genius of the librarian as well as on the social factor.

But taking a large view of the work of the library, I think we may say that the province of the library is in recreation, in information, in education, and in inspiration. And like those Mayan pyramids of which Dr. Hewett told us, you will observe that this is, as it were, a terraced pyramid, the greatest quantity of service at the bottom in recreation, the greatest quality at the top, in inspiration. I say "recreation" and emphasize that word, and yet it is difficult to say what limits should be put in the field of recreation. You have already heard much discussion as to how largely novels should be bought, but we must not forget that fiction serves its great purpose, as in the case of Dr. Billings himself, who, after the day's work, actually refreshed himself by running through a couple of novels a night before he went to sleep. There is a great phrase of the poet Gower,

"The world it neweth every day,"

and the purpose of recreation is to renew the man for his next day's work. The function of the public library in that field of recreation must, I think, be tested by its results on the reader in that direction.

Then comes the great field of information, for which the other name, or the finer name, is research work. Whether it is advisable for a library to answer five hundred times in a year, as the New York Public Library, I am told, did last year, how to pronounce the unpronounceable name of that Galician fortress over which the world is now warring, is certainly a matter of doubt. But through the telephone and in every way the public library must emphasize the work of informing its public, and more particularly, rendering every possible service at the behest of those men who are engaged in research work, historical or scientific, or other, and

with whom, of course, the librarian is in peculiar sympathy.

And then comes that great work of education, which is done so largely in connection with the school. For more and more we feel that the librarian and the teacher must be walking and working hand in hand. It is impossible, of course, to draw sharp lines of demarcation between the several provinces, for whether the story-telling hour is of recreation or of amusement or of education or of inspiration no one can say; indeed, all these four functions of the public library are joined more or less in the case of every reader. But the work of education is, of course, one which the library emphasizes perhaps above all.

Last and greatest of all is the work of inspiration, and that is not only the work of books, but the work of character, which nowadays we are more fond of calling "personality." That is the personal touch of the librarian, not only to supply readers with the books that will inspire, but to add to that inspiration the touch of personality, the charm which Miss Massee gave us in reading from the poets the other day.

I can not speak of the inspirational side of public library work without referring to the inspirational character of such gatherings as this and like associations. It seems to me we can not too much emphasize their nationalizing character in the work of such conferences as we hold from year to year, for which large bodies of people journey across our great country, find how great it is, come into personal relation with the people in another section and bring to that section the knowledge and the inspiration which for the moment engrosses them. I hope that this conference will in that way be of help to our California friends, but I am convinced that at least from the conference of 1915 we shall take away more knowledge and more inspiration than it has been our privilege to bring to California. For with its county system and in its many original developments, California and the Pacific

Coast have much to teach us who come from the East. And, after all, the great value of these conferences is the inspiration that comes from meeting face to face those of the same profession and feeling that each is one of a great army of peace, doing the work of the people, the work of the future. It is a profession which is singularly fortunate in many ways, I think—the only profession of which it can be said that no sooner does a graduate come out of the professional school than he or she is sure of instant place, so great is the demand still above the supply.

So for our work of inspiration we have the inspiration of a great and growing profession behind us; and this inspiration can never be of greater service than at this moment. It is not for librarians to interfere in the politics of their community, or in the politics of their nation, but it is for librarians to help to set and promote a standard of thought, to promote ideals which will tell in the thought of the nation. It will interest you to know that at this moment, in the midst of this calamity of world war, French library friends are setting themselves to the task of rebuilding France through the medium of public libraries, and at the head of that movement a government official is in touch with a number of library people in this country, with the intent of being ready to promote in France immediately after the cessation of the war a great public library movement modeled on the American plan, a course very fitting, because our own Benjamin Franklin, the first diplomatic representative of our country abroad, gave name to a library association far antedating the American Library Associa-

tion itself. And I know that all of you will be glad to co-operate with such friends as these in promoting throughout the world the American library spirit.

It was the hope of those of us who attended the Brussels conference in 1910 that the internationalism which there manifested itself everywhere throughout the exposition might bear fruitage of peace. One of the most striking exhibits shown at that exposition was that of the international associations graphically shown by a line drawn from each capital of Europe to every other capital where there were corresponding associations, so that from Brussels as headquarters hundreds of international associations were shown extending throughout the several countries of Europe and of the world, which the men at that conference believed were making war impossible and peace the future normal state of the world. How sadly that dream has been dissipated, those of us who visited the beautiful library of Louvain in that year and think of it today have had reason to know. But let us not despair; let us hold our country to the leadership of peace; let us be ready to help all throughout the world who want our help in the direction of our chosen profession, and let our brethren abroad, who may now be foes, be helped through our intermediation and our example in the future, to be again brothers, recognizing letters as the great means of letting one nation know the other, and recognizing that through such work as ours ultimately the feeling of brotherhood throughout humanity is again to become dominant in the world.